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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [TU](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#)
SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION
FRIDAY, JANUARY 8, 2010

Media Highlights: Obama and the Security Flaw Debate; Al-Qaida in Yemen; Congressman Hastings Visit; Armenian Genocide Paper for Turkish Student in NY; Romans Relocated; PM Erdogan's 2010 Plan; Erdogan-General Basbug Meeting; German FM Visits Ankara; Pope Benedict on Catholic Minority in Turkey; Iran Executes PJAK Leader; TV Spotlight

US Embassy Ankara - Turkey Media Reaction - January 8, 2010 as prepared by the Public Affairs Information Office

How the US is Playing

President Obama's Security Upgrade

In "Security Failure Debates Continue in the US," Islamist-oriented Zaman online highlights "White House says the US administration failed to understand the intelligence that it already had" and then reports the new measures Obama laid out to cover security gaps exposed by the bomb plot. NTVMSNBC online reports "Obama: We'll Fight the Intelligence Defects," noting "President Obama promises stronger aviation security after a failed attempt to blow up a US passenger plane." In "Obama Takes Responsibility For the Airline Bomb Plot," CNNTurk online says "President Obama took ultimate responsibility for the security failures that led to the attempted Christmas Day bombing and ordered reforms aimed at preventing future attacks."

Al-Qaida in Yemen

Turkish papers continue to comment on Al-Qaida in Yemen as well as security steps taken by the US saying that "military means might not work." In "Obama's Impasse" liberal Radikal's Haluk Sahin observes that the Yemen situation is "a question with no possible answers." Expressing regret about President Obama's speech which he describes as "giving up on peaceful messages" the writer says: "There is an obvious security issue and the main threat, Al-Qaida, has not been eliminated. President Obama has started giving concessions to the war lobbies. However the targeted countries are all Muslim nations and unfortunately at the end of the day these American efforts will be providing more ground to Al-Qaida presence." Another pundit, Yasemin Congar notes the potential for global conflict if the US intervenes in Yemen. In leftist Taraf, she writes: "If there is an intervention in Yemen, the impact will not be only in Yemen. The

Obama administration will have to put off its goals for the Middle East, including to persuade Iran for peaceful nuclear energy. In the end it will turn to a global conflict from Saudi Arabia to Iran and to others."

Congressman Hastings Visit: "Obama's Right Hand Man Asked About Gays and the Democratic Initiative" (Aksam)

Mainstream Aksam carries a front-page story covering Congressman Hastings meetings with NGOs during his visit in Ankara. The report focuses on his interest in Turkey's stance on anti-discrimination issues. The reports says: "Guests of the meeting with Hastings at the DCM residence included Ayse Sucu, Chairperson of the Diyanet Foundation's Women Branch; Ozturk Turkdogan, Chairman of the Human Rights Association; Hidayet Turksal, Chairperson of the Ankara Women's Platform; Yilmaz Ensaroglu of SETA and Baris Sulu, Coordinator of the Pink Life Organization. Hastings, who is known with his work against discrimination, asked whether gays are recruited to do their military service. Sulu responded by saying that gays are presenting medical reports to avoid military service. He added that if the military discovered that a recruit was gay then his family is called in a humiliating tone by saying 'come and get your daughter.' Hastings asked whether PM Erdogan's wife Emine continues to wear a headscarf. He added that as a black person he knew well what discrimination meant since they struggled for 120 years to achieve their rights. Hastings also asked what their response would be if the U.S. Congress discussed the Armenian Genocide Resolution. In response, he was referred to the murder of Hrant Dink, which indicated that there are still some in Turkey who treat the Armenian community with ill intentions. The Congressman also asked about democratic initiatives and wondered about the

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reasons for the closure of DTP even though it is this government that paved the way for a Kurdish television channel."

Turkish Student in NY Asked to Prepare Armenian 'Genocide' Paper (Milliyet)

Mainstream Milliyet and leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet report a high school Turkish student in Manhattan was asked in his World History class to prepare a paper on the "genocide" of Armenians at the hand of Ottoman-Turkish troops in 1915. The student's family wrote a letter of objection to the school administration, saying both the topic and bibliography provided were "biased." The family reportedly applied to the Turkish Consulate in New York for help.

In the Headlines

Turkish Roma Forced to Relocate

All media outlets report that escalating tensions in Selendi town in the province of Manisa continued from earlier this week when the homes, shops and cars of the Roma in the town were torched. Pro-government papers preferred to down play the situation by saying "Roma asked to be relocated due to safety reasons." Liberal Radikal reports Burhan Uckun, the person who allegedly caused the tensions by violating smoking ban in a coffee house, said the owner of the coffee house refused to serve him tea and called him a "dirty gypsy." The quarrel escalated, and resulted in assaults against the gypsies in the town after which the governor of Manisa, Celalettin Guvenc, relocated 76 gypsies to another town, Gordes. Mainstream Hurriyet claims the gypsies decided to leave when police said their safety could not be guaranteed. Cumhuriyet reports the gypsies have not been welcomed in Gordes either and town residents rallied for them to be sent away. The residents of Selendi told papers that for over 20 years, the gypsies have caused distress in the town. State Minister Faruk Celik said the riots in Selendi were "a local incident." Noting the seriousness of hate crimes, mainstream Hurriyet's columnist Sedat Ergin calls on the government to take immediate action: "This is an obvious example of a modern-age deportation. The government should take action to fulfill Turkey's commitment with OSCE against hate crimes, including a parliamentary commission that has to be set up to deal with these issues." Mainstream Milliyet Headlines "74 Gypsies Exiled from Their Town" while Milliyet columnist Ece Temelkuran warns that this cannot be considered a singular event and says there is the potential for more hate crimes against other ethnic groups and people with different sexual or political orientation.

Erdogan's 2010 Plan (Milliyet)

Mainstream Milliyet reports that the government is preparing to pass critical constitutional reforms on 'democratic opening' and 'judicial issues' without seeking the support of the opposition. Three hundred and sixty-seven parliamentary votes are needed for approval of a constitutional amendment in the parliament. If the votes is between 330 and 367, a general referendum is held on the amendment within 120 days. AKP, which has 337 seats in the parliament, submitted a proposal for holding a referendum within 45 days. Milliyet notes that the AKP plans to pass reforms to advance the democratic opening, make changes in the structure of the High Board of Judges and Prosecutors, make changes in regulations related to the banning of political parties and to make the decisions of the High Military Council subject to judicial review.

Military Headquarters Decisions (Hurriyet)

Today's papers report that the regular weekly meeting between PM Erdogan and Chief of General Staff General Basbug for the first time occurred in the General Staff HQs with the participation of Interior Minister Besir Atalay and Justice Minister Sadullah Ergin. The meeting lasted for two hours forty minutes. A written statement issued by the General Staff yesterday evening said domestic security and other issues were discussed in the meeting. Mainstream Hurriyet lists the decisions that emerged from the meeting as follows: State institutions will be more sensitive to each other, the picture of conflict between the institutions will be eradicated, relations

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between the police and the gendarmerie will be enhanced and cooperation will be established, institutions will establish healthy information sharing and common action should be taken to counter terrorism.

In a related story, all TV Channels announced as flash news this morning that the TGS cancelled its regular weekly press briefing and said that briefings will be held when necessary.

German FM Vows to Back Turkey's EU Bid

Today's papers highlight visiting German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle's promise to Turkey and quote him assuring Turkey that "I'm not speaking as a tourist with short pants but as a minister on behalf of the German government." Commenting on German Chancellor Merkel's resistance to Turkey's EU bid, Westerwelle said "what has been agreed between the EU and Turkey is still valid. The German government will fulfill its commitments. You have my word on it." Islamist-oriented Zaman says that the stance of the German FM and his contacts in Ankara were more constructive than expected. Following his meeting with Westerwelle, FM Davutoglu announced that the two countries were going to implement a mechanism for strategic dialog. Hurriyet says the support extended by Westerwelle to Turkey was historical.

Pope: Turkey Must Recognize the Status of its Catholic Minority (NTV website)

Hurriyet, CNN-Turk and NTV websites report that on Thursday Pope Benedict XVI called on Turkey to recognize the legal status of its Catholic minority. Under the headline, "Pope seeks more freedom for Catholics in Turkey," the Hurriyet website says unlike Turkey's other non-Muslim minorities, such as Orthodox Greeks and Jews, the Catholic Church is not formally registered in Turkey, which makes it difficult for the Catholics and Protestants to practice their religion.

Iran Executes PJAK Leader (CNN Turk website)

CNN Turk website reports Fesih Yasemini, a PKK/PJAK leader imprisoned in the city of Mako, was executed Wednesday. An Iranian Revolutionary Court sentenced Yasemini and five other PJAK members to death for "perpetrating bomb attacks, homicide, abduction, drug trafficking and terror." Other PJAK leaders, Ihsan Setahiyan and Hasan Hikmet Demir, have been executed over the past months, reports CNN Turk.

TV Spotlight (CNN Turk)

Turkey's government bond rating was raised to BA2 from BA3 at

Moody's Investors Service, and the outlook was changed from positive to stable.

The conference of Turkish ambassadors in Ankara ends today. Foreign Minister Davutoglu and other participants will continue talks in the city of Mardin over the weekend.

Addressing the ambassadors, Prime Minister Erdogan said Turkey's interest in Gaza was an expression of "humanism and concern for others."

MHP leader Devlet Bahceli said developments in Turkey would push for early elections in the autumn of 2010.

State Minister for Bulgarians Abroad, Bozhidar Dimitrov, apologized for "compensation claims" from Turkey after being harshly warned by his Prime Minister Boyko Borisov.

Foreign Minister Davutoglu said Turkey presented a note of protest to Norway after reports about that a Turkish woman died in Oslo when she was denied swift medical attention and her son faced police brutality.

Tobacco producers first increased prices in the face of new taxes

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levied, but then curbed the prices. This will result in a decrease in tax revenues for the government.

At least 140 people have been killed in south Sudan as aid agencies warn of new civil strife.

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